

Project

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Baltic Gender Deliverable 8.2

Guidelines for GEPs as a part of marine research proposals and project plans

Authors

Main Author
Contributing Author(s)

Name

Laura Uusitalo
Eija Rantajärvi
Helena Valve

Organization / Unit

SYKE
SYKE
SYKE



1 Introduction

Many agencies that fund research projects require the project proposals to include a gender equality plan (GEP) or consideration of gender issues in some form.

However, as GEPs primarily are compiled at the organizational level of employers such as institutes and universities, also the majority of GEP guidelines have been written for institutes. This gives a perspective of an institutional actor quite different from a project organization, a network of multiple individual legal entities with a common task. Therefore, the institutional GEP guidelines are useful to project managers only to a limited extent. However, research projects can – and should – also commit to a set of actions to support and promote gender equality. Projects can also act as ambassadors of good conduct between institutes so that different research organizations can learn good practises from each other, to be implemented at the institute level.

This deliverable summarizes best practises of research project level GEPs and proposes a set of gender equality promoting actions that research projects can commit to. It is important to notice that these guidelines address issues related to the organization of research projects and operation of research teams (summarized in Figure 1). However, considerations related to actual research practices (framings, methodologies, methods) are only briefly covered; these issues are discussed in the Baltic Gender work Package 4 and particularly in Deliverable 4.1.

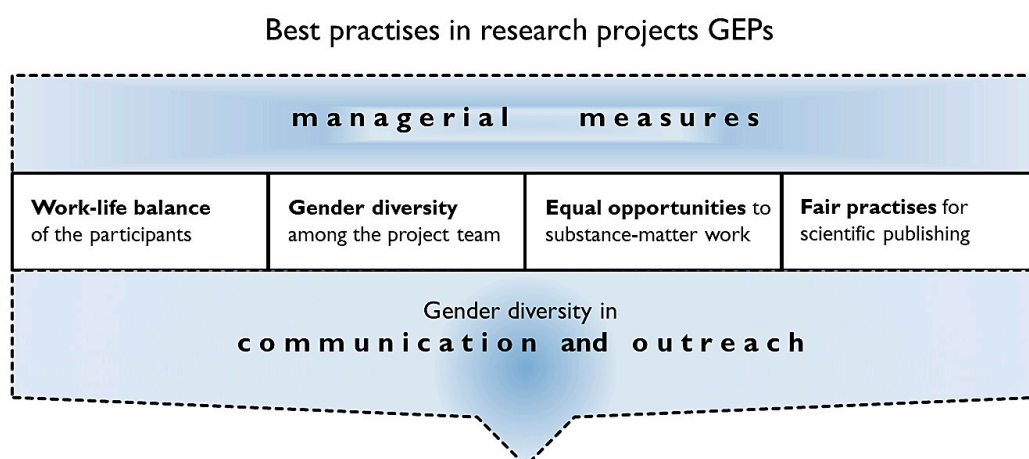


Image of science and scientific work to society

Figure 1. Graphical summary of the elements of project GEP aspects covered in this document. Figure: Eija Rantajärvi.

2 Materials and methods

One of the challenges of compiling a set of best practises at project-level GEPs is that the project GEPs are normally not public. The project proposals, where the GEPs have been outlined, are not published even after the project is granted funding, and, unlike at organization level, the GEPs are not often published as part of the project's normal dissemination. Therefore, there is a very limited access to actual operative project-level GEPs to draw the best practises from.

To overcome this problem, Baltic Gender project reached out to project coordinators and participants in the participating institutes, as well as the BONUS project coordinators through the BONUS secretariat, and asked for the project proposal phase GEPs that could be reviewed for this deliverable. These project GEPs were anonymized as part of the process.

In addition to the project GEPs, the following documents were reviewed, and best practises that are also relevant for network structures such as research projects were identified and reviewed. However, some of these documents did not include any mention of gender issues.

- Guidelines of BONUS, the joint Baltic Sea research and development programme (<http://www.bonusportal.org>)
- Gender Equality plan of the Academy of Finland, a major research funder in Finland (http://www.aka.fi/globalassets/40akatemia/tasa-arvo_2017_2018.pdf)
- Guidance on Gender Equality in Horizon 2020 (http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/h2020-hi-guide-gender_en.pdf)
- Finnish advisory board on research integrity (<http://www.tenk.fi>)
- ERC Scientific Council gender equality plan 2014 – 2020 (https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/content/pages/pdf/ERC_ScC_Gender_Equality_Plan_2014-2020.pdf)
- Gendered Innovations (http://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/gendered-innovations/index_en.cfm?pg=home)



3 Observations regarding projects' and research funders' GEPs

The extent and quality of gender equality plans of marine science projects, as reflected in the project plans, varied considerably. Many project plans did not have any mention of gender issues, and with those which did, the extent and thoroughness of the text varied.

In the project proposal GEPs that were reviewed for this report, a recurring issue was that the gender equality issue was understood simply as the proportion of female researchers in the project team; the only reference to gender equality possibly being a mention such as "Women participation in the project reaches [XX] % with [X out of Z] principal scientists being female" or "the proportion of females in the project workforce tends to be over 50 % regardless of the project". This reflects the immaturity of understanding of gender issues in science, as, firstly, gender equality is seen as a women's issue rather than more broadly as something that would benefit everyone, such as, allowing men more freedom to balance between work and private life. Secondly, these plans fail to mention any measures that are going to be taken by the project; the implication is that supporting gender equality is reduced to ensuring a high proportion of female researchers in the project.

Some of the science funders did not have any guidelines regarding gender equality in the projects they fund, even though they do require a statement about gender issues in the project proposals.

4 Best practises of gender equality plans in research projects

Based on the above-mentioned materials, we have identified topics that should be addressed by a good gender equality plan in a research project. These issues have been divided into two sections: those to be considered at the planning phase (when writing the application) and those that need attention while the project is running. Many of these issues are relevant also from wider equality and equal opportunity perspective, including people with dependants (single parents, people taking care of disabled or elderly relatives, etc.), disabilities, etc.

The proposed measures can be broadly divided into the following categories:

- a. **Gender diversity among the project team.** Gender diversity of the project team is more than just the percentage of people of each gender participating in the project. It is also essentially about the distribution of people in different positions (e.g. gender balance in leadership vs. other positions), salary, terms of employment, hiring procedures, possibility to get promoted, and de facto responsibilities of the project team members. The EU Horizon 2020 programme also identifies gender balance in research teams and decision-making as its objectives (European Union 2016).
- b. **Work-life balance of the participants.** Gender has been shown to be a relevant factor in how people negotiate and organize their work-life balance; parents of young children of both genders experience conflicts between work and domestic duties, but these conflicts remain in women's life while for men, they only belong to the small child rearing state (Emslie and Hunt 2009). It has been shown that balancing work and family, and particularly having children, while pursuing an academic career is a major concern particularly for women (Sallee et al. 2016 and references therein). In order to enable full participation of all life stages and both genders in research projects, the project must take active measures to support work-life balance.
- c. **Fair practises for scientific publishing.** Scientific publishing forms the cornerstone of a scientist's career, and great care should be taken in scientific research projects that all scientists are given equal opportunities to participate in scientific publishing.
- d. **Equal opportunities to participate in the substance-matter work.** The practical work of a research project (e.g. field sampling campaigns and laboratory work) may also include gender-sensitive aspects. These should be identified, and measures should be taken to reduce any gender-specific effects of the working practises as well as the content and presentation of the results.

- e. **Gender diversity in communication and outreach.** Communication and outreach are essential parts of modern research programmes, and a window through which society sees science and scientific work. Therefore, the communication strategy also needs to acknowledge the importance of, and promote, gender equality. All communication should also be careful to use gender-neutral language.
- f. **Managerial measures to make sure that the plan is being followed.** Setting up a gender equality plan does not help, if the plan is not followed. It is highly important that compliance to the plans is followed and failures are discussed and remedied.
- g. **Gender issues in the research content.** Research questions can be gendered as well, e.g. the issues may be more relevant to one gender than others, citizen participation may be gender-biased, or the theories and methods include gendered assumptions.

4.1 In the project planning phase

- Strive to ensure balanced gender representation on the leadership and management positions of the project, i.e. those positions that are filled already in the application stage. This may require enabling and encouraging women to take up leadership positions.
- Commit to organize project meetings so that no travelling is required during weekends or public holidays. This will enable better work-life balance also for employees with small children, elderly parents, and other dependants.
- Ensure that all project partners commit, to the extent allowed by their legal limitations, to:
 - o Gender-neutral recruitment processes: The team doing the recruitment selection should be gender-balanced, and all applicants' merits are evaluated using the same principles and metrics in a transparent process. The evaluation criteria should be designed to encompass all sexes and genders equally.
 - o Determining the salaries of the project team based on merit and responsibility, without direct or indirect influence of gender.

- Setting similar terms of employment regardless of gender.
 - Allowing the employees to choose part-time contracts.
 - Allowing flexible working hours.
 - Allowing telecommuting.
- Nominate, or commit to nominate, a gender diversity representative for the project. This person can be contacted confidentially by anyone in the project to discuss gender related issues, and they may take these issues up with the project coordinator, steering committee, etc., who are obliged to give the issue serious consideration.
- Set up indicators for gender equality in the partner institutions.
- Set up clear responsibility for monitoring and reporting these indicators.
- Set up measures for partners failing to adhere to their commitments regarding gender equality.
- When planning the project, consider how gender can be taken into account in the research content. Gendered differences can be relevant for the formulation of research aims and questions; choice and tailoring of methodologies and methods; organization of citizen participation; and dissemination of findings. Consider topics such as the following (this is not a complete list):
 - Research questions focus attention on some topics instead of others: whose issues and concerns gain attention in your project? Does the relevance possibly coincide with gender? Modify the question so that it reflects also concerns of the marginal gender(s).
 - Theories and methods embody assumptions about what differences and dimensions count as relevant. Do the ones applied in your project acknowledge gendered differences? If not, consider changes.
 - Categories, classifications and default identities used in research (such as in questionnaires) can be stereotyping and marginalizing. Make sure that the research setting provides space for diversity and does not reproduce stereotypes.

- Consider using gender as an analytic category so that study can generate understanding of gendered differences.
- Ensure that the research setting allows reflexivity so that newly observed phenomena can be taken into account. Not all relevant – and possibly gendered – differences can be anticipated in the planning phase.
- When planning quantitative social scientific analysis, make sure that the sampling logic and questionnaire contents take into account the existence of marginal genders.
- When planning qualitative social science analysis, action research, or knowledge co-production, make sure that the array of informants is diversified in terms of gender.

4.2 When the project is running and the findings disseminated:

- Ensure that the work load of all positions is such that they can be carried out during the agreed work time (office hours) to the extent possible.
- Ensure equality of opportunities for project members to attend meetings and training.
- Particularly if the consortium or the relevant scientific field is male-dominated, support non-male researchers e.g. by setting up women's network to enhance communication and peer support.
- Ensure equality of opportunities for project members to prepare scientific publications: make sure that non-scientific duties, or duties that are unlikely to lead to publications, are allocated in a fair and gender-balanced way.
- Enforce fair allocation of scientific authorship based on contribution: make sure that the authorship is granted through transparent processes, acknowledging the true contribution of the scientists. Make sure that the authorship is not agreed in small clubs or based on personal demands or pleas to the first author.
- Ensure that the tools used in the practical work, e.g. field and laboratory work, are suitable for use to every researcher regardless of gender or

age, to the extent possible. When possible, select tools that do not require physical strength or reach, even on higher cost.

- Plan meetings and important deadlines so that they do not collide with national/school holidays.
- Encourage male employees to take all the family leaves that are available to them.
- Publish the project's gender equality plan.
- Make the gender statistics of the project public (proportions of scientists, leadership positions, etc.) and update them regularly. This is also in line with the European Union (2016) objective of integrating gender/sex analysis in research and innovation content.
- Avoid gendered language in the project communication, both within and outside of the project.
- Try to ensure gender-balanced representation in advisory, stakeholder, and end-user groups.
- Provide space for confidential discussion and feedback: How does the division of work and responsibilities work in practice? Do both men and women feel that they are equally treated both at work and work-related recreational activities? What do the team members think could be improved as it comes to every-day practices, communication and management?

5 References:

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